registered under the provisions of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Since it was a Schedule III animal, the case was compounded after an imposition of penalty of Rs. 2000/-.

Expenditure on/Income from Forests

943. MISS MABEL REBELLO:
SHRI SURESH KALMADI:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the comparative annual expenditure on and income from forests of the country and of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and West Bengal, for the period from 1st April, 1970 to 31st March, 1999;

(b) how much forest areas of the country and of the above States got reduced during this period;

(c) what is the justification for making such heavy investment in the forest sector, in view of the reduction in forest area, the comparative income and expenditure from it; and

(d) whether Government would consider alternative investment policy in regard to forests and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) The details of annual expenditure and income from forests are not compiled in this Ministry and these are maintained by the respective State Governments.

(b) The Forest Survey of India, Dehradun has been assessing the forest resources of the country on a periodic basis since 1987. The Recorded forest area of the country as per State of Forest Report, 1987 was 751,846 sq. km whereas it is 765,210 sq. km. as per State of Forest Report, 1997. However the forest cover of the country has decreased from 640,819 sq. km as per 1987 assessment to 633,379 sq.

km compared to 1997 assessment. The forest area and forest cover as per State of Forest Reports for Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and West Bengal are as under:—

State	As per State of Forest Report, 1987		As per State of Forest Report, 1997	
	Recorded Forest area	Forest cover	Recorded Forest area	Forest cover
	(in sq.km)			
Madhya Pradesh	155414	130099	154497	131195
Maharashtra	64055	45616	63842	46143
West Bengal	11879	8432	11879	8349

(c) India is the second most populous and seventh largest country in the world having population over 1 billion with 1.8% of forest cover. It is sustaining the needs of 17% of human and 18% of the livestock population of the world. The per capita forest of the country is less than 0.08 hectare which is quite less than the world's average of 0.64 hectare and 0.5 hectare for developing countries. The principle aim of the National Forest Policy, 1988 is to ensure environmental stability and maintenance of ecological balance including atmosphere equilibrium which are vital for sustenance of all life forms, human, animal and plant. The Policy envisages that the derivation of direct economic benefit must be subordinated to this principle aim. However, the withdrawals of forest produce to meet the requirement of people is much more than what is spent for the development of forests.

(d) The Ministry has formulated National Forestry Action Programme for sustainable development of forests and bringing one-third area of the country under forest/tree cover for the next 20 years. The current investment in forestry sector is Rs. 1615 crores from all sources as against the average annual requirement of Rs. 4669 crores

per annum as per the National Forestry Action Programme. The Programme calls for alternative means and mechanism of fund mobilisation.

Soil Degradation

944. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that soil degradation in India is a major factor affecting agricultural productivity;

(b) whether out of 328.7 mil. hectares of geographical area, 141.3 mil. hectares are subject to water and wind erosion and another 33.7 hectares are degraded due to special problems; and

(c) if so, what action Government are planning to reverse this trend?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) As per information provided by the Ministry of Agriculture, out of the total geographical area of the country (about 329 million ha.), 173 million ha. area is estimated to be degraded due to water and wind erosion and other problems like salinity, water logging, shifting cultivation etc. Of this, about 124.9 million ha. is affected by water and wind erosion.

(c) The Government has various centrally sponsored schemes to address the problem of soil degradation. The schemes of Ministry of Agriculture for improving agricultural productivity and to arrest soil degradation are: Watershed Development Projects in Shifting Cultivation Areas, Soil Conservation in the catchment of River Valley Projects and Flood Prone Rivers, National Watershed Development Project in Rainfed Areas, Reclamation of Alkali Soils and EEC assisted Alkali Land Reclamation and Development Programme. Some of the schemes of Ministry of Environment and Forests, which include soil conservation component, are: Integrated Afforestation and Eco-Development Projects Scheme, and Area